

CHANGING EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP
IN THE PHILIPPINES.-

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In discussing changing executive leadership in the Philippines, one can be aggregative, looking for patterns and trends in the backgrounds and behaviour of the group studied, or one can be personalistic, identifying specific individuals and focusing on their styles and influences as executive leaders. In this paper, I will use both approaches, though leaning more toward the latter. Hence, the approach used is more impressionistic than statistical, based more on a personal knowledge of the changing situation than an analysis of aggregate data.

Discussion is focused on changes in the past ten years which cover the administration of President Diosdado Macapagal (1962-65) and that of President Ferdinand E. Marcos (1966-present). Within the latter administration, changes during the first term of President Marcos (1966-69) and those that have occurred in his second term will be looked into. Background and historical data and information from other studies will be used to highlight the changes observed during the period. Some speculation will also be made on possible changes in executive leadership that may occur in the Philippines in the near future.

Background on Executive Structures

It has been observed that the President of the Philippines, more than his American counterpart, is vested with more formal powers which are rooted in the country's legal system, political style, cultural origins and historical background.¹ The government upholds the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances but even in the Constitution, the framers intended the President to be dominant for they wanted an Executive "who shall rule unembarrassed" and get his programs implemented.² As Chief Executive, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, head of the ruling political party and even "Father of his People", (during President Manuel L. Quezon's time), the President plays a dominant role and dictates the patterns of executive changes in the country.

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Changing executive leadership in the Philippines, therefore, depends heavily on the particular approach and style of the President. This approach and style, of course, depends on the man's personality, his relationships with Congress and the Supreme Court, demands made upon him by interest groups and citizens and other factors. It is reflected in the choice of top executives the President names to the Cabinet, his close personal advisers, and, to a lesser degree, the types of people appointed to the higher civil service.

Types of Executives

In choosing executives who work for him, the President may choose any of the following types: professional politicians, political administrators, or technocrats. Technocrats, in turn may be divided into business executives, civil servants or academics. These types, of course, are based on modal characteristics. Any one executive may possess certain characteristics that may place him in any of the categories mentioned above. Placing him under a specific category, therefore, will be dependent on the traits that most describe him, usually as others see him.

In this study of changes in Philippine executive leadership, attention will be focused on shifts and patterns denoting what particular type of executive predominates in the President's team. Such shifts and patterns may be empirically observed, as in the exit of one executive type and the entry of another. Others may just be subjectively assessed from Presidential actions, the rumors that invariably fly around power centers, or chance discussions with those concerned.

The types of executives mentioned above may be described as follows:

The professional politician is usually an elective official or an active party member. He may be requested by the President to give up his elective or party post and take on an executive position, or, more often, he may have just lost an election and is appointed to an executive position to harness his energies, keep him loyal, satisfy his constituents, or even genuinely help the President. The professional politician will most likely have a bailiwick, usually having taken the road from local to national politics. In his executive job, it is generally assumed that political objectives will color his decisions, for the benefit of his supporters, the party, or the President. Examples of such executives include incumbent Secretary for Agrarian Reform Conrado P. Estrella, Secretary for General Services Constancio Castaneda, or former Secretary of Justice Juan Liwag.

The experience or background of the political administrator may not be as obvious as the professional politician but this does not mean that he is less of a politician. Usually, the political administrator is a politician in the making. He may not have a political bailiwick nor electoral experience but he probably toiled in and for the party. His appointment may be due both to his accomplishments or image as a doer and his future reputation as a definite comer. In performing his executive tasks, he may be expected to take efficiency and effectiveness as well as political pay-offs into consideration. Examples of such executives include former Executive Secretary Rafael Salas, former Commerce and Industry Secretary (now Senator) Ernesto Maceda, or the current Secretary of National Defense, Juan Ponce Enrile.

The technocrat is usually chosen for personal skills and assets rather than political reasons. He may be an academic, a civil servant, a military officer, civic leader, or a well known journalist or labor leader. The important thing is that he adds a semblance of professionalism, technical know-how, and even idealism and good looks to the President's team.

Among technocrats, the business executive may be given an executive position by the President in recognition of actual or imputed managerial, technical and other talents. Often, the business executive recruited for a top executive job has achieved considerable wealth or a reputation as an entrepreneur or manager. He may have participated actively in getting the President elected but for image-building purposes, this fact may not be mentioned openly. Public claims may be made, in fact, that the business executive is taking on a public duty at financial and personal sacrifices. Examples of business executives drafted for public duty include former Chairman of the National Economic Council Sixto K. Roxas, current Secretary of Public Works and Communication David Consunji, or even the present Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Arturo Tanco, Jr.

Claims about a non-political team in the President's Cabinet are also made when career civil servants are appointed to top executive positions. Most career civil servants consider the post of Undersecretary of a department as the highest possible level they can attain. They may be made Acting Secretary during transition periods or when no politically acceptable candidate is chosen by the President but generally, the chances of their landing a full-pledged Cabinet level job are considered slim. Now and then, however, the President may choose a technocratic career civil servant for various reasons. Examples of such executives include Commissioner of the Budget Faustino SyChangco who has served three Presidents; Secretary Juan Manuel of the Department of Education or the late Paulino Garcia, Secretary of Health in the Macapagal administration.

The technocrat par excellence, of course, is the academic who is offered a key executive position. Such an executive is usually widely known and respected as an expert in a particular field (economics and finance, political science or public administration, law or medical science). He may be a young, energetic "whiz kid" or a more established and respectable authority on a specific subject. Generally, the claim is made that he was drafted for his knowledge and skills and to enable the Government to provide effective and efficient services to the people. Examples of academics who have held top executive positions include current Chairman of the National Economic Council Gerardo P. Sicat, incumbent Secretary of Finance Cesar Virata, Secretary of Justice Vicente Abad Santos, Secretary of Commerce and Industry, Troadio Quiazon, Jr., former Secretary of Education Onofre D. Corpuz, and Secretary of Social Welfare Estefania Aldaba-Lim.

Changing Patterns

Taking into consideration the types of executives mentioned above, the following generalizations may be made:

- a. Professional politicians were more important during the Macapagal administration, especially when the President decided to run for re-election in 1965.
- b. Political administrators dominated the first years of the Marcos administration although professional politicians became relatively important during the re-election campaign in 1969.
- c. Since President Marcos started his second term in 1970, technocrats rather than political administrators or professional politicians have predominated.

The Macapagal Years. The administration of President Diosdado Macapagal was ushered in with great reform expectations and hopes for accelerated economic and social development in the whole country. Macapagal held a Ph.D. in Economics, was a poor farm boy who made good, and his honesty was almost legendary. Coming so closely to the widely discredited administration of the late President Carlos P. Garcia, Macapagal was hailed as a great reformer. Garcia had never quite come out from under the dominant image of the late President Ramon Magsaysay. Some of that President's charisma, identification with the masses and clean and honest reputation were evoked by Macapagal.

Macapagal started very well with a technocratic team, mostly of business executives recruited into key Cabinet positions. Sixto K. Roxas, prominent businessman and economist, was made Director of the Program Implementation Agency, the President's main coordinating machinery. When coordination between long range economic and social planning and program implementation became a problem, Roxas was appointed Chairman of the National Economic Council, the country's long range (sectoral) planning agency. Another technocrat, a young professor of economics and Vice President of a private university named Armand Fabella was made director of the PIA (later changed to the President's Economic Staff). A career civil servant, Dominador Aytona, was named Budget Commissioner, to coordinate the fiscal programs of the government with the economic and social development plans and programs.

These early promising starts, however, did not last long. The Macapagal administration was plagued with foreign exchange problems, unemployment, and unsuccessful grandiose programs such as the attempt to provide employment through make-work projects. Roxas resigned from his Cabinet position and attributed most of the administration's failures to "a crisis in management". Fabella tried to carry on the economic tasks but with the 1965 elections looming in the horizon, politics became more and more important as an ingredient in governmental decisions. Eventually, Macapagal had to fall back on old political cronies, some of these harking back to his small town politics days. However, the challenge of President Ferdinand E. Marcos was too strong (Marcos had crossed over from the Liberal to the opposition Nacionalista Party) and he won the 1965 elections.

The First Marcos Term. Like the early Macapagal years, the first term of President Marcos was characterized by change and reform. Unlike Macapagal, however, Marcos turned to political administrators instead of technocrats. His early commitments were simplified into the slogan of "Rice and Roads". Most of the resources of the government were devoted to achieving self-sufficiency in rice and to the construction of infrastructures (roads, irrigation, schools, airports, harbors).

To many knowledgeable people in the Philippines, the early Marcos years should really be considered the Salas years. For it was an open secret that most of the successes in the rice and roads programs were due to the efforts of Rafael M. Salas, Executive Secretary. Salas was a young civil servant who had a law degree from the University of the Philippines and an MPA from Harvard. He had worked for the National Economic Council and for the University of the Philippines. Those close to him knew he had political ambitions for he came from a political family in the sugar-producing Negros provinces but his reputation was earned primarily as an executive.

Another political administrator who toiled hard and long during the early Marcos years was Manuel Syquio, a communications engineer and expert who did not quite enjoy the status and prestige accorded to Salas but who nevertheless was closer to the President in many ways. As Undersecretary of National Defense, Syquio was instrumental in the unique monitoring system which made possible the effective coordination of the rice and roads program. From the Infrastructure Operations Center, Syquio and his communication experts (many of whom were in the Army) collected, analyzed and fed information to the Chief Executive on a continuing basis. Even when Syquio admitted to being responsible for the unfortunate "Jabidah Affair" when special forces being trained by the Army for possible infiltration into Malaysia rebelled and exposed the whole thing, he still remained close to the President and had his say in executive decisions.

While President Marcos relied on political administrators like Salas and Syquio for administrative and program results, he maintained his contacts with old political friends. To some extent, this was forced on him by the Nacionalista Party elite who did not particularly like the way the President was running the country and the party. As re-election time drew closer, the role of professional politicians around Marcos became more pronounced. Such cronies from Ilocos politics days as Antonio Raquiza and Floro Crisologo were placed in key positions. The 1969 elections gave Marcos an overwhelming victory but his tactics of "political overkill" alienated some of the political administrators and technocrats who had been so instrumental in his achievement of administrative programs and projects.

The Second Marcos Term. The administration of President Marcos since 1970 has been mainly technocratic rather than politically administrative. To some extent, this was due to electoral victories of some key political administrators (former Secretary for Community Development and later Secretary of Commerce and Industry Ernesto Maceda was elected to the Senate while Manuel Elizalde, Jr., who was in charge of cultural minorities is still contesting a Senate seat). A number of important administrators and technocrats also resigned (Rafael Salas, Onofre D. Corpuz, Dioscoro Umali, Placido Mapa, Jr., Leonidas Virata, and Gregorio Feliciano being the most prominent among these). Finally, political differences between President Marcos and his friends also decreased the number of key executives who were non-technocrats (Vice President Fernando Lopez resigned from his Cabinet position as Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Manuel Syquio dropped out of the scene, Crisologo died).

Depending on what political group you listen to in the Philippines, there seem to be two ways of looking at the current reign of technocrats. Those who are pro-Marcos assert that the availability of technocrats is only Marcos' attempt to keep politics out of government and to achieve results. They claim that since Marcos is no longer available for another presidential term, he is doing his best to achieve economic and social development for the country. Hence, he has asked for the services of young and non-political technocrats, who view their jobs mainly as efforts to achieve developmental goals.

Those critical of the Marcos administration, however, point to the non-political nature of the Marcos technocracy as only a reflection of the President's desire to centralize power unto himself and to perpetuate himself in power. They assert that Marcos cannot bear to share the limelight with anyone. They point to the differences that resulted in the resignation and going abroad of Rafael Salas as proof of this personalist tendencies. A former Cabinet member who had resigned explained to this author what prompted him to quit. "I suddenly realized", he said, "that I was instrumental in merely prolonging the reign of a President whose programs I did not believe in any more and a person I had lost trust in. The President had changed. He had become corrupted by his power. So, I quit because I did not want to contribute toward the continuation of that power".

The Present Marcos Team

Looking into the backgrounds of the key executives around President Marcos today, it is difficult to miss the technocratic character of the people closest to the President. The 18 Cabinet members or persons with Cabinet rank and 19 Undersecretaries with sub-Cabinet rank are mostly professionals and career administrators who are better known for their accomplishments and reputations than their political connections.

One striking fact about the key executives in the Philippine Government at present is their youth. Table 1 shows that 8 out of 18 Cabinet members are on the younger side of forty -- Francisco "Kit" Tatao, the President's Press Secretary is 33, Gerardo "Gerry" Sison, the Chairman of the National Economic Council is 36, and such persons as Cesar Virata, Arturo "Tong" Tanco, Jr., Adrian Cristobal, and Alejandro "Alex" Melchor are barely 40.

The educational attainment of the members of the President's Cabinet is also noteworthy. As shown in Table 2, 24 of the 41 higher executives had either Masters or Ph.D. degrees, most of them from institutions of higher learning abroad (Sicat has a Ph.D. in Economics from MIT, Tanco an MBA from Harvard, and Romulo has so many Ph.D.'s from abroad it is difficult to keep track of them).

Traditionally, higher civil servants in the Philippines had law degrees, as revealed in a pioneering work by Francisco.³ In some ways, the persistence of this trend is still shown in Table 3, where more than 50 per cent of Undersecretaries (who tend to be more reflective of the traditional features of the civil service) have law degrees. As far as Cabinet members are concerned, however, the dominance of lawyers seems to have sharply declined. In fact, only five out of 18 Cabinet members studied law, and most of these officials combined a legal education with other fields such as business or economics. The increasing importance of technical education is seen in the number of engineers, economists, and other professionals among Cabinet members and higher civil servants.

The technocratic character of the top executives in the Philippines at present is seen in Table 4, which reveals the professions of such executives. Among Cabinet members, academics accounted for the largest group, followed closely by businessmen, civil servants and educators. Only two members of the Cabinet may be classified as "professional politicians" and neither of these may be called traditional or old-line politicians. Among the undersecretaries, careerism seems to be reflected in the fact that 11 out of 19 officials were civil servants, indicating that merit rather than political patronage seemed to have guided the President in choosing these members to his team.

Finally, the image of merit rather than partisan or other considerations as a guide in selecting the key executives in the Philippines is considerably burnished by the ethnic background of the executives. In the multi-ethnic Philippine society, political partisanship usually follows language or regional cultural lines. Thus, it has been said of Macapagal that he surrounded himself with officials from his home province of Pampanga while the joke around Malacanang nowadays is that Ilocano has replaced Pilipino as the national language within the confines of the Presidential Palace. However, as shown in Table 5, language and cultural lines do not seem to be too important in the selection of key executives anymore. About 12 out of 18 Cabinet members may be considered Tagalogs, either from their province of origin or their long residence and identification with Manila and other Tagalog-speaking places. While President Marcos is Ilocano, there are only two easily identifiable Ilocanos in his Cabinet. There are relatively more Ilocanos among the Undersecretaries but the proportion of Tagalogs remains high. It is noteworthy that no Muslim is representative in the President's team and that the proportion of Visayans is very small.

In terms of what the predominance of technocrats in the executive leadership in the Philippines means, an inescapable conclusion from the present facts seem to indicate a trend toward greater centralism and consolidation of power in the Presidency. First of all, among the members of President Marcos' official family, there is no one who can

provide even the potentials of political challenge. General Romulo, the most prominent member of the Cabinet is an elder statesman in the twilight of his career. Alejandro Melchor, who occupied the "Little President" position so ably held by Salas before, is an efficient and true technocrat. It can be truly said, therefore, that the President's team is not one of "stars" but of "supporting casts". Thus, they serve to further his will and to support his authority and power, instead of sharing in it.

Conclusion and Speculations

But what about the future? What are the potential trends in executive leadership in the Philippines?

Future changes will depend critically on what President Marcos will do. There are two types of speculation on this. First, there are those who believe that the current technocratic and relatively non-political nature of the President's executive family are designed to highlight the President's importance and greatness. These people believe that Marcos will not voluntarily give up his authority and power in 1973. They point to the present Constitutional Convention and the influence that the President exerts over its proceedings as an example. They believe that changes in the Constitution will be introduced, enabling the President to yet seek another term and to continue his work.

A rather troublesome variant of this "Marcos will stay" scenario paints a violent picture. In this version, the Constitutional Convention cannot be swayed into allowing another term for the President. The President insists on staying, there are riots, assassinations and open violence, and the President declares martial law. No elections are held and the President rules by decree. The relatively non-political technocrats continue to serve him and are loyal to him and the country.

Another speculation has the President giving way but setting up the First Lady, Imelda Marcos, as the presidential candidate. In this scenario, the First Lady wins by a very narrow margin amidst charges of cheating, vote buying, terrorism and graft and corruption. President Marcos still governs, with the First Lady as a figure head. Again, technocrats rather than professional politicians or political administrators will play important executive roles.

A final version, of course, has both President and Mrs. Marcos giving way willingly or unwillingly and the Liberal Party, under the leadership of Senator Gerardo Roxas and/or Senator Benigno Aquino, assuming power. With this change in power, what possible changes in executive leadership can be expected?

If Roxas and Aquino win, they will probably start out as reformers and try to project a professional, technocratic and non-political image. Hence, the trend toward political administrators and technocrats may continue. Of course, some political workhorses have to be rewarded, but such rewards may not necessarily be in the form of executive positions.

Roxas and Aquino will most likely be influenced by the fact that their following is mostly young, idealistic, left-of-center, and critical of old-line politics. Thus, the combination of reformist stance, internal Liberal Party pressures, and the expectations of student and leftist leaders may work toward the continuation of the professional and technocratic stance. It looks, therefore, that as far as executive leadership in the Philippines is concerned, the trends toward a more technically qualified and less partisan administration are markedly visible in the future.

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TABLE 1
Age of Top Executives

<u>Age</u>	<u>Cabinet Members</u>	<u>Undersecretaries</u>
Below 35	1	---
35 - 44	7	6
45 - 54	5	5
55 - 64	2	7
65 and over	3	1
	18	19

TABLE 2
Educational Attainment

<u>Education</u>	<u>Cabinet Members</u>	<u>Undersecretaries</u>
Undergraduate	1	---
Bachelors degree or equivalent	5	7
Masters degree	10	10
Doctorate	2	2
	18	19

TABLE 3

Fields of Education

	<u>Cabinet Members</u>	<u>Undersecretaries</u>
Law	5	10
Engineering	3	4
Military Science	1	1
Business, economics	2	2
Education	2	2
Medicine	1	---
Foreign Service	1	---
General Education (BA)	3	---
	18	19

TABLE 4

Profession Prior to Present Position

	<u>Cabinet Member</u>	<u>Undersecretaries</u>
Businessmen	4	2
Professional politician	2	1
Academic	5	2
Civil servant	3	11
Journalist	1	1
Educator	2	1
Military	1	1
	18	19

TABLE 5

Ethnic Backgrounds

<u>Linguistic - Cultural Groups</u>	<u>Cabinet Member</u>	<u>Undersecretaries</u>
Tagalog	12	7
Ilocano	2	7
Bicolano	1	2
Pangasinan	1	1
Visayan	---	2
Pampango	2	---
	18	19